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SUBJECT: RUSSIA BLASTS GEORGIA ON SEPTEMBER 20 INCIDENT

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. In a rambling screed before the Security Council on September 26, Russia's PermRep Churkin accused the Government of Georgia of everything from warmongering to attempted murder. Finally focusing on the September 20 violence in Georgia that was the item he was ostensibly addressing, Churkin claimed the Russians involved in the incident were in the vicinity under a contract to train ethnic Abkhaz in "anti-terrorism" techniques. DPKO told USUN that UNOMIG has preliminarily determined that the Russians had no legitimate reason to be in the area. Churkin called for no particular Council action prior to a report on the incident from UNOMIG, expected next week. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) In a rambling fifteen minute presentation during closed Security Council consultations on September 26, Russian PermRep Vitaly Churkin lambasted Georgia for the "destructive line of its leadership." Speaking in Russian during the "other matters" segment of the Council's agenda, Churkin began by condemning Georgia for an "outright refusal" to sign a commitment to avoid the use of force and for "feverish buying of weapons." He then declared that former Georgian Minister of Defense Okruashvili had publicly alleged that Georgian President Sakaashvili had instructed him to "eliminate a prominent Georgian businessman." Sneering that these episodes were instructive about the reality of "democracy Georgian-style," Churkin finally got around to the primary subject of his intervention -- the September 20 clash in Abkhazia between ethnic Abkhaz and Russians on one side and ethnic Georgians on the other that reportedly left two Russians dead and several Abkhaz wounded.

¶3. (SBU) Churkin said the Russians involved in the incident were contract workers training Abkhaz in "anti-terrorism" techniques. He charged that the world has seen much of this kind of "terrorism" from Georgia lately, including a September 5 operation involving Georgian special forces' capture of six Abkhaz. President Sakaashvili had spoken on television in Russian saying that the Abkhaz side "would get even more," asserted Churkin.

¶4. (SBU) After expressing U.S. condolences for the loss of life, Ambassador Wolff noted that UNOMIG SRSG Arnault was actively investigating the remote location involved in the September 20 incident and expected to produce a report next week. He said we should await the results before drawing any conclusions. Calling attention to the series of destabilizing incidents, including on August 6, as well as rising Georgian-Abkhaz tensions, Ambassador Wolff said the U.S. looked forward in this regard to the OSCE briefing to the Council on September 28 (septel). He said the increasing number of serious incidents in the region indicates that the Council needs to look at the issue and to hear from Georgia as well.

¶5. (SBU) China agreed that the Security Council needed to

pay more attention to the region and asked for DPKO to have UNOMIG provide more information on the recent incidents. UKUN hoped that UNOMIG's investigation would uncover the facts and lead to solid proposals, noting that August and March incidents also showed a pattern of worrisome activity. Indonesia called for UNOMIG to report on the situation on the ground in Abkhazia. Slovakia recommended waiting for the results of UNOMIG's investigation, to have as much information as possible. Italy echoed this and said the recommendations of the Joint Fact Finding Group (JFFG) following the March attack should be implemented. (NOTE. The report called among other things for installation of state-of-the-art radar as a precaution against incursions by air. END NOTE.) The French said that the Council should let UNOMIG finish its investigation, but in its capacity as Security Council president, would relay a request to the Ghanaian presidency (October) for DPKO to organize a briefing as soon as possible.

¶6. (SBU) NOTE. DPKO confirmed to Deputy PolCounselor that blood samples from the dead Russians have been sent for DNA analysis. DPKO confirms, however, that that the two Russian nationals were killed and believes they had no legitimate reason for being in the vicinity. END NOTE.)

KHALILZAD